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U. S. Department of Agriculture

JUNE WEATHER AND CROPS.

A radio talk by J. B. Kincer, Weather Bureau, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, July 6, 1932.

It has been said that normal weather is something that rarely occurs, and there is a good deal of truth in that statement. Normals, you know, of rainfall and other weather elements are simply the long-time averages, usually covering, in this country, a period of some fifty years. From year to year the actual temperature and rainfall nearly always vary from these long-time averages, or normals, and frequently the variations are marked. The weather so far during the present growing season, when we consider the United States, as a whole, has been much nearer normal than usual, and, on the whole, it has been favorable for agricultural interests.

The more important weather elements, as affecting agriculture, are temperature and rainfall, with the latter of more consequence in this country. As regards temperature, the last three months have, on the whole, been remarkably near normal in nearly all sections of the country, with June somewhat warmer than normal nearly everywhere, notwithstanding some sections had one or two decidedly cool spells. Cold weather did some local crop damage in the Northeast, about the 10th of the month, when some frost occurred as far south as Pennsylvania, but that was not unusual. You may be surprised to know Pennsylvania has had, in June in previous years, temperatures as low as 20°, while Michigan has had, in that month, as low as 12° above zero.

We have said that, so far as agriculture is concerned, rainfall is usually the most important weather element in this country, and, at the same time, it is the most variable. Because of the extensive area of American agriculture, and the characteristic spottedness of summer rains, we seldom, if ever, have a year when all agricultural sections are adequately supplied with moisture. It is almost an invariable rule that some crops in larger or smaller areas are damaged by dryness, but, at the same time, it is seldom that the greater portion of the country needs rain at any one time. It is also very rare that substantially all parts of the country have sufficient moisture for crop needs. At the present time, the outstanding feature of American agricultural weather is the nearly entire freedom from damaging drought over any extensive area.

In our weather chat a month ago we pointed out that moisture conditions, at that time, were mostly favorable, except that rains were desired at many places from the Ohio Valley northward and eastward, with the most urgent need of rain in Ohio and some adjoining sections. Recent generous and timely showers over these areas have now largely corrected this situation and, at the present time, only very limited sections, principally in Pennsylvania, are now in urgent need of moisture. There has been too much rain in some areas, with considerable flood damage in parts of the Southwest and in some central Appalachian Mountain districts. The favorable moisture situation

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in the Northwestern States, which have had several years of damaging dryness, was maintained through June, with only local sections needing rain. The contrast in weather conditions between this year and last year over the northern Great Plains is more marked than for any other section of the country.

Seasonal farm work during June made fairly good progress. The cultivation of row crops has been hindered by rain and wet fields in some southeastern and southwestern sections, and parts of the upper Mississippi Valley, notably northern Iowa; otherwise, cultivation is mostly good and fields, as a rule, are clean. Recently there has been some delay also to harvesting in the Southwest and western Wheat Belt, and some damage is reported to grain in shock, while high winds have lodged considerable small grain in the Spring Wheat Area. Winter wheat harvest has progressed northward to southern Michigan, northern Illinois, and southern Iowa, while cutting is in full swing in Pennsylvania and Nebraska.

There was some improvement in winter wheat in the western portion of the belt, by better moisture conditions, but most of the Ohio Valley and middle Atlantic areas were too dry for this crop. The comparative coolness, and mostly adequate soil moisture promoted good growth in spring wheat, with the crop filling well in the earlier sections; recent high temperatures in the Pacific Northwest have been unfavorable for wheat. Oats show improvement in the northern portion of the country, but much is short in the Ohio Valley States. Favorable corn-growing weather was the rule, and that crop at the present time is in good to excellent condition in nearly all of the important producing sections, with recent rains in the Ohio Valley and Lake region very helpful. There has been mostly too much rain for cotton, especially in the southeastern and northwestern portions of the belt.